

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A double-stranded RNA (ds-RNA) expression vector that comprises the following sequences (a) to ~~(e)~~(c):

(a) the following nucleotide sequence (a-1) or (a-2):

(a-1) a nucleotide sequence encoding all or a part of the target gene; or

(a-2) a nucleotide sequence encoding DNA that hybridizes under stringent conditions to DNA consisting of a sequence complementary to the nucleotide sequence (a-1);

(b) a nucleotide sequence complementary to the nucleotide sequence (a) and an inverted repeat thereof; and

(c) a sequence encoding a loop region and connecting the nucleotide sequence (a) to the nucleotide sequence (b),

(d) a sequence that autocatalytically cleaves RNA located upstream of the nucleotide sequences (a) to (c); and

(e) a sequence that pauses RNA polymerase located downstream of the nucleotide sequences (a) to (c);

wherein the sequences are transcribed into RNA and thereby forming ds-RNA having a stem-loop structure and wherein the ds-RNA is capable of inducing RNA interference.

2. (Original) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 1, which further comprises a polymerase II promoter.

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3. (Original) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 1, which further comprises a developmental-stage-specific promoter.

4. (Original) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 2, wherein the polymerase II promoter or developmental-stage-specific promoter is a cytomegalovirus (CMV) early gene promoter.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 51, wherein the sequence that autocatalytically cleaves RNA is a ribozyme site which is a sequence capable of being autocatalytically cleaved by the ribozyme activity.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 71, wherein the sequence that pauses RNA polymerase is a sequence of the MAZ domain.

9. (Currently Amended) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 1, wherein the nucleotide sequence (c) is as shown in SEQ ID NO: 2, 5, or 6.

10. (Previously Amended) The ds-RNA expression vector according claim 1, wherein the target gene is a disease-associated gene.

11. (Previously Amended) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 1, wherein the target gene is the Ski gene.

12. (Previously Amended) The ds-RNA expression vector according to claim 11, wherein a part of the target gene is a 540 bp 5'-region of the Ski gene.

13.– 24. (Withdrawn)

25. (Original) An animal cell having the ds-RNA expression vectors according to claim 1 introduced therein.